Focus Group Analysis Report
DHS HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Prepared by Booz Allen Hamilton

Washington, DC

August 14, 2003

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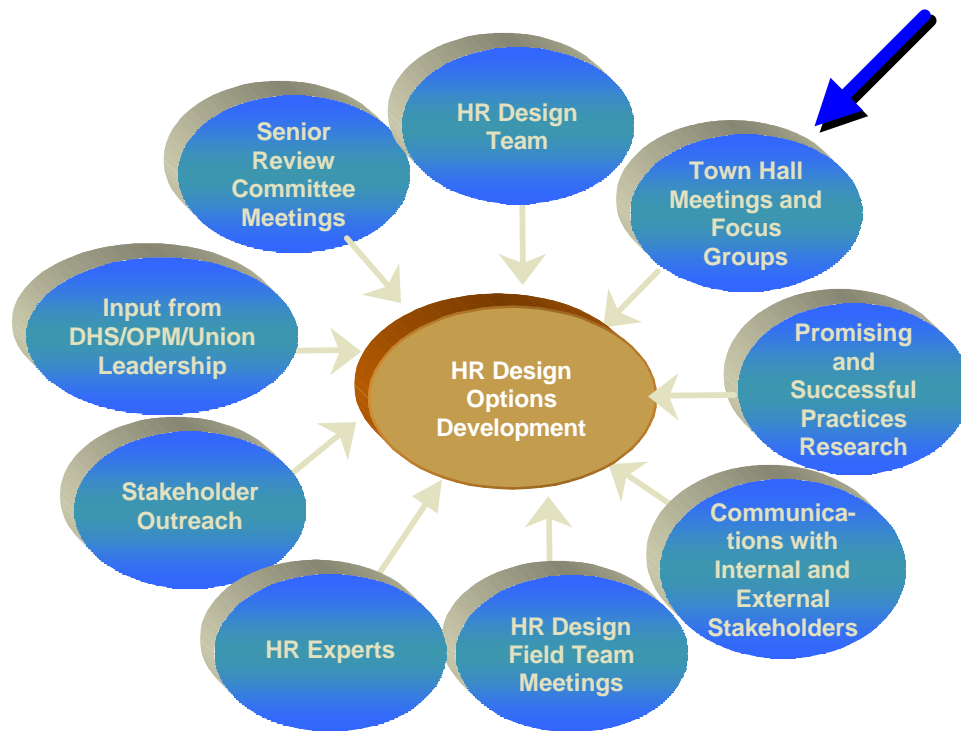
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Executive Summary

Background and Introduction

▸ The Homeland Security Act directed that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) create a "modern" Human Resource Management System (HRMS)

- The Act specifies 6 HRMS functions for consideration: pay, classification, performance management, labor relations, discipline, and appeals
- The Act also directs that creation of the new HRMS be done collaboratively—that is, with the active participation of DHS employees

▸ An important first step in collaborative formulation of the new HRMS was the creation of a joint DHS/OPM Design Team, which consists of approximately 80 DHS employees, supervisors, and union representatives, as well as members from OPM

- The role of the the Design Team is to formulate "options" for the new HRMS

▸ One way the Design Team practiced collaboration was by conducting nationwide focus groups to obtain DHS employees' perceptions of personnel policies and practices

▸ In formulating options, the Design Team will use numerous sources of data. This presentation summarizes one source: focus groups

Focus groups are one key source of data that the Design Team will use to create options
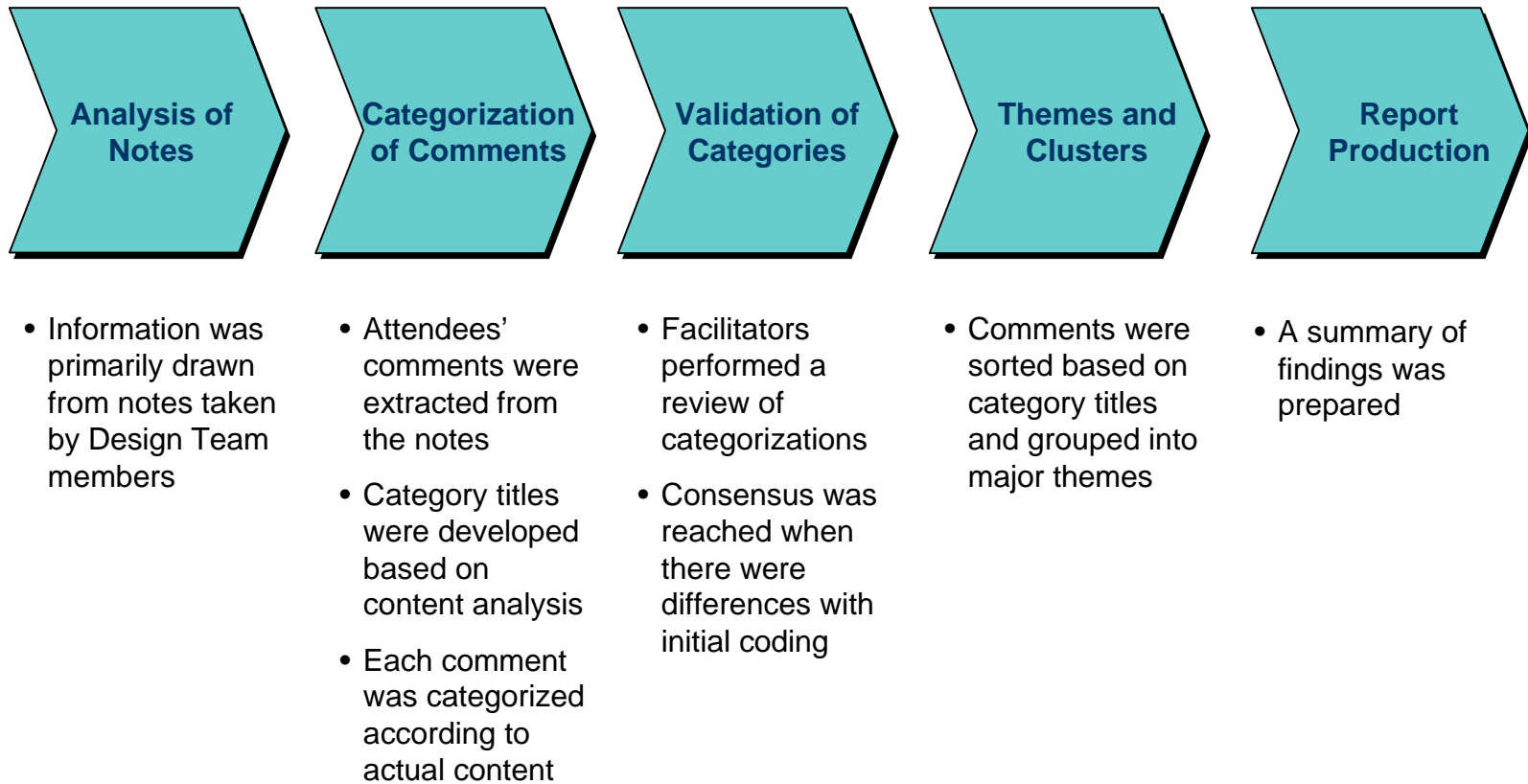

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Overview of Focus Group Methodology

▶ The Design Team considered multiple factors in the identification of the best focus group sample possible, given constraints in time and resources

- **Component coverage**
- **Job coverage**
- **Group representation**
- **Geographic coverage**
- **Diversity**
- **Bargaining unit and non-bargaining unit representation**

▶ To accommodate the sampling considerations, the focus group sampling plan included 54 focus groups across 9 locations plus 2 sessions with HR professionals

- 5 employee focus groups and 1 supervisor focus group* were conducted at each of the 9 locations
- Locations were selected to achieve major coverage of the various DHS components, occupations, diversity, etc.

Seattle, WA

Detroit, MI

New York, NY

Baltimore/DC Norfolk, VA

Los Angeles, CA

Atlanta, GA

El Paso, TX

Miami, FL

*In El Paso, there were 4 sessions with employees and 2 sessions with supervisors

▶ The number of employees requested from each organization (see Appendix A) was reflective of the employee population in that location, with the following exceptions:

- In most locations, participation was limited to no more than 25% from a single organization
- Exceptions were made for locations selected to target particular populations
- A special focus group was held with Wage Grade employees

▶ The level of bargaining unit representation at the focus groups was determined based on OPM data and in consultation with union representatives

▶ Bargaining unit employees were selected by union representatives; non-bargaining unit employees and supervisors were selected by managers

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Analysis Process

▸ Booz Allen Hamilton followed a rigorous analysis process to report these findings

Analysis of Notes	Categorization of Comments	Validation of Categories	Themes and Clusters	Report Production
• Information was primarily drawn from notes taken by Design Team members	• Attendees' comments were extracted from the notes • Category titles were developed based on content analysis • Each comment was categorized according to actual content	• Facilitators performed a review of categorizations • Consensus was reached when there were differences with initial coding	• Comments were sorted based on category titles and grouped into major themes	• A summary of findings was prepared

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Introduction to Focus Group Findings

▸ To prepare this summary, the Design Team requested that Booz Allen analyze focus group data and objectively report findings

  – Booz Allen was not asked to interpret the findings, draw conclusions, or make recommendations. Instead, Booz Allen was asked to present the broadest, most complete perspective of what focus group participants said

  – The themes presented, therefore, represent the full range of perspectives that emerged from the focus group sessions, and may not reflect every individual comment expressed

  – Due to the underlying philosophy that a range of voices—both big and small—must be heard, this report does not reflect frequency or degree of support for the themes or specific comments

▸ The Design Team's observations regarding the focus group participants included

  – The Design Team was profoundly impressed by the dedication and professionalism demonstrated by DHS employees, supervisors, and the HR professionals, and by their commitment to the security of the United States

  – The Design Team was also impressed by the high level of interest participants demonstrated in their current and future human resource management systems (HRMS)

  – The Design Team noted that participants liked many things about the current systems; they also identified many opportunities for improvement

  – They felt it will be important for DHS to communicate to employees the benefits and reasons for any changes

  – They also noted that in some cases, participants had questions about how new systems might work, suggesting that education and communication should be an important part of system implementation

▸ The remainder of this executive summary highlights the themes that emerged from focus group sessions; a full discussion of each theme, to include perspectives raised by employees, supervisors, and HR professionals, can be found in the body of the report

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Participants' Advice to the Design Team

EMPLOYEES AND SUPERVISORS	HR PROFESSIONALS
▸ Recommended improving the ability (e.g., through increased training) and increasing the accountability of management, which is central to the success of DHS' future HR system	▸ Said a key priority with employees is "predictability", but acknowledged that at the same time we need to achieve productivity
▸ Wanted the Design Team to communicate and keep employees continuously informed of system progress and changes; employees and supervisors should be treated as valuable resources in providing input into the system	▸ Believed that it is hard for people to break the tie psychologically with GS, even though there is no requirement to stay in the GS schedule
▸ Suggested moving slowly and planning carefully to ensure success; Design Team should conduct research and benchmarking in the design of systems	▸ Acknowledged that people will be impacted by changes in the system and that, whatever system is adopted, it must be easily understood and explained; should also include pilot tests of the new systems
▸ Wanted greater consistency across DHS' personnel systems, but also said the systems should allow customization and tailoring to meet workforce needs	▸ Noted that people are concerned about their jobs and that consistent and clear communications are key

▸ Asked the Design Team to protect employee interests
  – Assure consistency and fairness
  – Don't reduce levels of pay and benefits currently in place
	▸ Offered several suggestions to the Design Team
	  – The system must be able to accommodate movement inside and outside of DHS
	  – One system may not be enough for DHS—could have single system with multiple variations
	  – Need to have automated systems to support processes

▸ Said the Design Team should not pursue changes just for the sake of change	

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Pay and Classification Themes

▸ Participants felt the current system is a good one

▸ They indicated the current system can be improved

  – Improve equity and consistency regarding grade and pay across series within DHS

  – Provide pay that is more comparable with the market so it is easier to recruit and retain employees

  – Address issues around job duties, classification, and career paths

  – Consider additional improvements to current system (pay for skills, overtime, pay compression, etc.)

▸ Participants noted that exceptional performers should be rewarded more consistently and frequently

▸ They expressed mixed views about paybanding and other performance-based alternatives

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Performance Management Themes

▶ Employees perceived favoritism exists in the current process

▶ Participants wanted a consistent and fair process

▶ They thought evaluations should be based on relevant and clearly stated performance standards

▶ They also wanted performance evaluated by those knowledgeable of their work

▶ Participants wanted supervisors to have adequate time to spend on performance management activities, including increased communications, coaching, and career guidance

▶ They also wanted increased accountability for managing performance and ensuring fair, effective, and objective assessments

▶ Participants expressed contrasting views regarding rating scales

▶ Participants provided additional suggestions on how to improve performance management

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Labor Relations Themes

▸ Participants agreed that unions and collective bargaining rights should continue at DHS

▸ Participants wanted a labor/management relationship with two-way communications, teamwork, and non-adversarial problem solving

▸ Participants expressed contrasting views regarding a desire to reinstate partnerships versus concerns about the effectiveness of these processes

▸ Participants wanted more labor relations training and internal labor relations support with increased skills

▸ Participants expressed contrasting views regarding the need for flexibility in making personnel decisions during mission critical and emergency situations

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Discipline and Appeals Themes

▸ Participants recommended a streamlined, faster, and fair discipline and appeals process

▸ Participants wanted independent review of grievances and appeals

▸ Participants wanted more consistency in applying discipline

▸ Participants said supervisors should deal more effectively with poor performers

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Participants Discussed Other Issues Outside the Scope of the Design Team's Focus

▶ Indicated a need for greater integration across DHS agencies
- Utilize staff and resources across agencies and departments effectively
- Increase consistency among agencies through communication, training, and guidelines
- Create single, unifying culture within DHS, taking into account input from all agencies

▶ Wanted to have a clear understanding on how all incoming and new agencies function
- Clearly define agency roles, responsibilities, and functions
- Critical to understand the relationship and unique needs that exist among all agencies within the organization

▶ Expressed concerns regarding competitive sourcing; wanted more information about DHS' plans and how they affect existing employees

▶ Expressed concerns around TSA, including
- Address basic issues (e.g., benefits, paychecks)
- Provide clarification around systems and processes that are in place
- Provide training for supervisors
- Minimize use of temporary supervisory rotations

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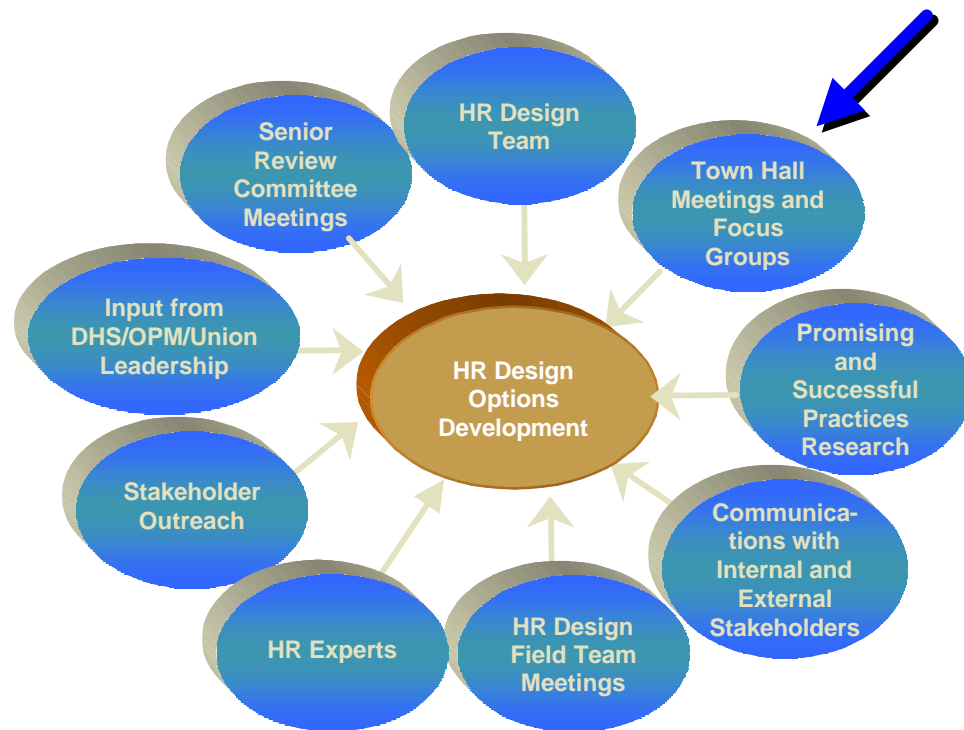# Participants Discussed Other Issues Outside the Scope of the Design Team's Focus (cont'd)

▶ Discussed other human resource functions

- **Training**: Provide supervisory skills training for supervisors and more developmental training for employees; consider centralized training and professional development

- **Benefits**: Provide employees with more choices and flexibilities (e.g., health insurance, retirement, flexibility with sick leave, tuition assistance, transportation subsidies)

- **Work-life balance**: Consider telecommuting and alternative work schedules to promote a positive workplace

- **Recruiting and selection**: Recruit qualified and skilled employees, especially at the supervisory level

- **Automated systems**: Decrease paperwork/administrative burden by streamlining through automation

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Background and Methodology

Background and Introduction

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▶ One way the Design Team practiced collaboration was by conducting nationwide focus groups to obtain DHS employees' perceptions of personnel policies and practices

▶ In formulating options, the Design Team will use numerous sources of data. This presentation summarizes one source: focus groups

Focus groups are one key source of data that the Design Team will use to create options

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Focus Group Design

▶ The Design Team took several steps to assure an effective focus group process. Specifically, Design Team members:

   – Took a collaborative approach—the goal was to hear from a diverse group of people and interests from across the organization to understand a range of perspectives around these issues, not to identify majority views or build consensus

   – Brainstormed the types of questions needed to solicit useful information for options development

   – Collected information pertaining to the population of DHS employees by geographic location, organization, and bargaining unit representation to determine sampling strategy

   – Partnered with DHS' three largest unions (AFGE, NTEU, NAAE) in the design and conduct of the focus group sessions. Design team members, including union representatives, were directly involved in:

      ▪ Participant selection strategy

      ▪ Protocol development

      ▪ Determination of focus group logistics (e.g., facilitation, note taking, Design Team role at focus groups)

▶ The following pages provide a summary of the focus group design decisions and process

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Sampling Considerations

▸ The Design Team considered multiple factors in the identification of the best sample possible, given constraints in time and resources. Key factors addressed were:

  – **Component coverage:** Include major components of the new DHS organizational structure– BICE, BCBP, TSA, CG, S&T, USSS, EPR, IG, and FLETC

  – **Job coverage:** Include a variety of occupations

  – **Group representation:** Include representatives from various employee groups, including Wage Grade employees, Human Resource professionals, and supervisors

  – **Geographic coverage:** Include cross-country representation, including coverage of air, sea, and land ports

  – **Diversity:** Include a diverse group of employees based on a variety of factors (e.g., ethnicity, age, gender)

  – **Bargaining unit and non-bargaining unit representation:** Include the perspectives of bargaining unit and non-bargaining unit employees

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Sample Selection

▶ To accommodate the sampling considerations, the focus group sampling plan included

– Conducting 54 employee and supervisor focus groups across 9 locations; at each location, 5 employee focus groups and 1 supervisor focus group were conducted*

– Conducting 2 additional focus groups with HR professionals (one session focused on pay, classification, and performance management; the other session focused on labor relations, discipline, and appeals)

Seattle, WA

Detroit, MI   *New York, NY*

Baltimore/DC
Norfolk, VA

Los Angeles, CA

Atlanta, GA

El Paso, TX

Miami, FL

– Selecting locations to achieve major coverage of the various DHS components, occupations, diversity, etc.

* In El Paso, there were 4 sessions with employees and 2 sessions with supervisors

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Sample Selection (cont'd)

▸ The number of employees requested from each organization (see Appendix A) was reflective of employee population in that location, with the following exceptions:

  – In most locations, participation was limited to no more than 25% from a single organization

  – Exceptions were made for locations selected to target particular populations (e.g., Coast Guard in Norfolk)

  – Special focus groups were held with Wage Grade employees and HR professionals

▸ For each organization, the level of bargaining unit representation at the focus groups was determined based on OPM data on bargaining unit membership and in consultation with union representatives

▸ Bargaining unit employees were selected by union representatives, non-bargaining unit employees and supervisors were selected by managers

  – Union representatives and managers were asked to select a diverse group of focus group participants based on a variety of factors (e.g., work location, ethnicity, age, gender, occupation)

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Protocol Development

▸ A focus group protocol was developed to ensure a consistent discussion process and data collection approach

   – Developed draft protocol, focused on the 6 HR functions under consideration (pay, classification, performance management, labor relations, discipline, and appeals), grouping them into 4 major discussion areas

   – Designed the protocol to obtain information on what works and what could be improved

   – Reviewed by senior Design Team leaders and Design Team members prior to finalizing

   – Tested at a pilot focus group session and further amended after the first formal focus group session

▸ The finalized protocol is included as Appendix B to this report

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Focus Group Protocol

Introduction
- Background
- Process
- Ground Rules
- Introductions

Focus Group Questions
- Areas of discussion
   – Pay and Classification
   – Performance Management
   – Discipline and Appeals
   – Labor Relations

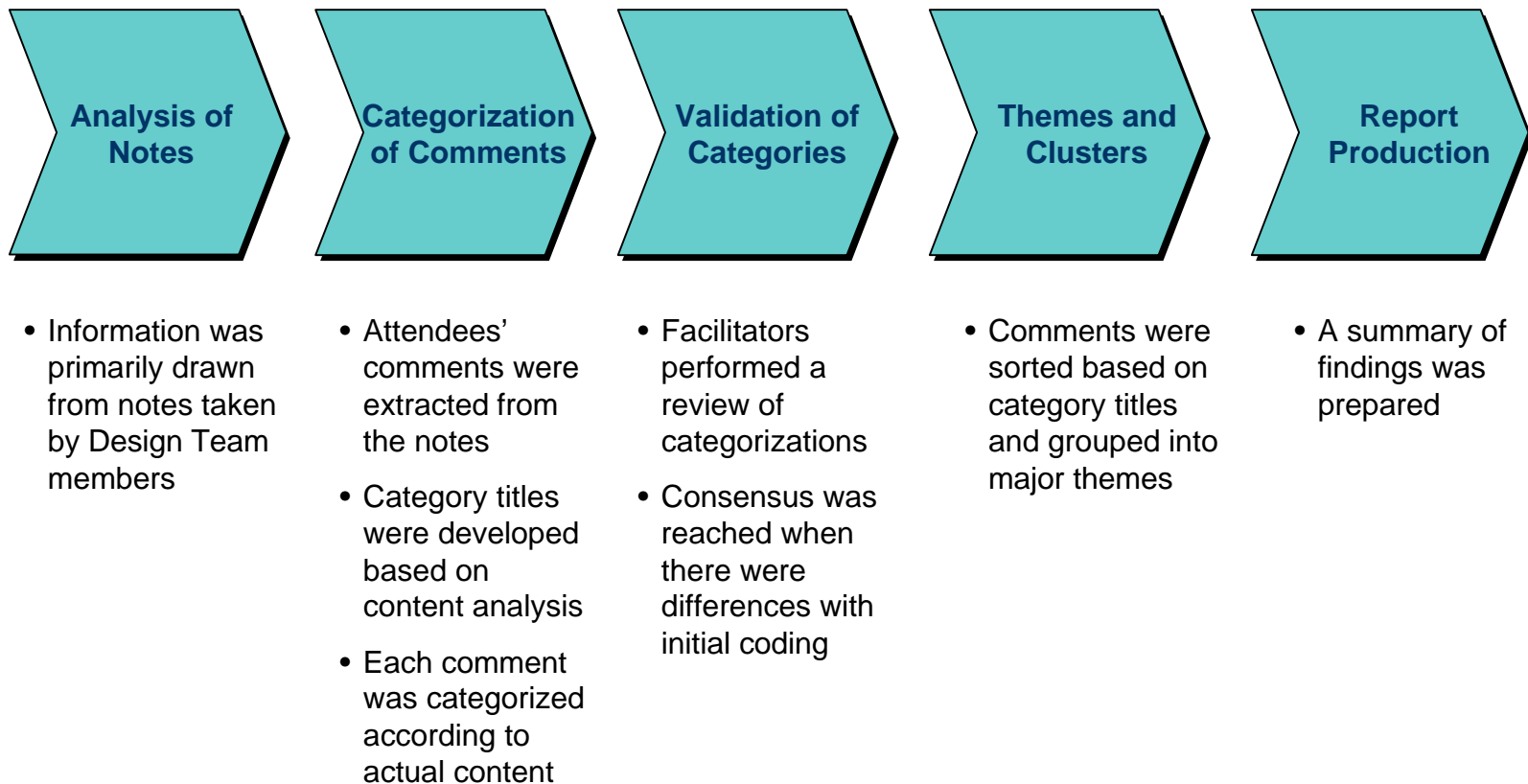
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Conducting the Focus Groups

▸ The focus group process was designed to ensure that there was minimal disruption to participants and the organization

- – Management at each site were contacted prior to conducting the focus groups to inform them of the purpose, intent, and process of the sessions

- – Sessions were designed to last approximately 90 minutes to obtain maximum input in a minimum amount of time

▸ Each session was led by a professional facilitator

▸ The focus group process was piloted with a group of employees in the DC area; modifications to the process were made following this pilot session

▸ Design Team members had various roles in each focus group conducted

- – Observers—Design Team members listened to participants' comments first-hand

- – Note takers—In each session a Design Team member served as an official note taker; Design Team members alternated serving in this role

- – Subject matter experts—Other Design Team members served as subject matter experts, answering any specific questions raised by the employees with regard to technical matters

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The Design Team Encountered Minor Challenges in Conducting the Focus Groups

▶ While the focus group design aspired to achieve broad representation of employee perspectives, there were challenges, including time and resource constraints that limited the number of focus group sessions that could be held and the length of sessions

▶ Attempts were made to assure that employees and supervisors participated in separate focus group sessions; however, there were a few instances when a couple supervisors attended employee focus group sessions

▶ In another instance (El Paso), more managers showed up than originally planned and an additional supervisory focus group was conducted to accommodate them

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Summary of Findings

▶ Introduction to Findings

▶ Participants' Advice to the Design Team

▶ Pay and Classification

▶ Performance Management

▶ Labor Relations

▶ Discipline and Appeals

▶ Additional Issues Identified

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▸ The findings section presents all of the themes from the focus group sessions, organized into 6 areas

- – Advice to the Design Team
- – Pay and classification
- – Performance management

- — Labor relations
- — Discipline and appeals
- — Additional issued identified

▸ The first area presents the opinions and ideas that participants addressed directly to the Design Team, and is entitled "Advice to the Design Team"

▸ The subsections that follow include themes from each of the HR functional areas—pay and classification, performance management, labor relations, and discipline and appeals—as well as some additional organizational and HR issues participants discussed

▸ For ease of navigation, the HR functional area sub-sections begin with a summary page listing the themes, followed by descriptions of a range of perspectives regarding each theme expressed by employees, supervisors, and HR professionals

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The Design Team's Perspective of the Focus Group Process

▸ The Design Team was profoundly impressed by the dedication and professionalism demonstrated by DHS employees and supervisors and by their commitment to the security of the United States

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HR PROFESSIONALS

▸ Said a key priority with employees is "predictability", but acknowledged that at the same time we need to achieve productivity

▸ Believed that it is hard for people to break the tie psychologically with GS, even though there is no requirement to stay in the GS schedule

▸ Acknowledged that people will be impacted by changes in the system and that, whatever system is adopted, it must be easily understood and explained; should also include pilot tests of the new systems

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Summary of Findings

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Pay and Classification Themes

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▸ They indicated the current system can be improved

   – Improve equity and consistency regarding grade and pay across series within DHS

   – Provide pay that is more comparable with the market so it is easier to recruit and retain employees

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▸ Participants noted that exceptional performers should be rewarded more consistently and frequently

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Participants Felt the Current System Is a Good One

EMPLOYEES

▸ Stated that they understand the system, including where they fit and how to progress within the system

▸ Noted that pay is regular and predictable—enables people to plan for the future and feel secure knowing they will attain a certain level of pay over time

▸ Indicated that the current system

– Is objective and mitigates potential subjectivity around pay decisions

– Offers built in increases to reward seniority/experience

– Offers overtime pay, premium pay, and compensatory time

– Consists of a well-defined career ladder

– Provides flexibility to recognize performance (e.g., Quality Step Increases (QSIs) and other awards)

▸ Felt there are ways the current system can be improved (described in more detail in the following pages)

SUPERVISORS

▸ Also said that the system is predictable, minimizes subjectivity, and offers clear and attainable career paths, and noted there were areas for improvement

▸ Indicated that step increases may help with retention, as employees like the guarantee of increased compensation

▸ Indicated that the classification system enables managers to target required qualifications and write position descriptions easily

HR PROFESSIONALS

▸ Felt that standardization in pay and classification helps prevent perceptions of inequity and makes it easier to move from organization to organization

▸ Noted, however, that even with a standardized system, there can be problems with consistency in pay as organization tries to overcome market forces

▸ Noted the GS system offers some amount of fairness, but has too much rigidity

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They Indicated the Current System Can Be Improved: Equity and Consistency

EMPLOYEES

▸ Expressed desire for equity, fairness, and consistency in the pay and classification system across series

▸ Felt pay and benefit disparities exist among people performing similar work— in some cases, those working side-by-side

- Classification inconsistencies in terms of career ladders (e.g., different entry and journey level grade progressions)

- Inconsistent organizational policies regarding overtime and premium pay (e.g., ability to receive overtime, ceilings on overtime, different rates for overtime, use of compensatory time)

- Variability exists in law enforcement professionals' entitlement to 6 (c) coverage

- System should be flexible enough to compensate for temporary job assignments and increasing job responsibilities

SUPERVISORS

▸ Also said disparities exist across occupational groups doing similar work and said that DHS must ensure equity in pay and classification

▸ Also felt that variability in law enforcement officer pay must be addressed

▸ Stated that supervisors should earn overtime and not be limited by overtime caps; noted that supervisors are sometimes paid less than their employees

HR PROFESSIONALS

▸ Also indicated that disparities must be addressed

▸ Noted that employees, especially in law enforcement occupations, are aware of pay and benefit disparities within their occupation

▸ Suggested looking at law enforcement compensation (LEAP, AUO, FLSA) and how it affects operations

▸ Suggested that DHS develop a uniform, statutory definition of law enforcement and assure that it is clear and applicable to all groups appropriately covered by the provisions

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They Indicated the Current System Can Be Improved: Market Comparability

EMPLOYEES

▸ Felt pay should reflect the market rate; salaries should be comparable with the private sector

▸ Believed that DHS' inability to pay market rate makes it difficult to attract and retain qualified individuals

▸ Noted importance of addressing high cost of living in certain areas (through locality pay policies, etc.); felt it was important to adjust pay based on local markets

▸ Concerned that current base pay is insufficient in certain locations

  – Believed entry-level pay does not provide a living wage

SUPERVISORS

▸ Also raised the issue of market comparability, saying that the GS system is too inflexible to compete with the private sector

▸ Said that pay must be comparable with other markets' law enforcement rates

HR PROFESSIONALS

▸ Noted that the GS system does not take into account changes in the market place

▸ Wanted ability to set employees' pay at a reasonable rate to be competitive, but said it is difficult due to the rigidity in the standards that must be applied and the lack of market comparisons

▸ Suggested considering special bonuses, allotments, or allowances (rather than permanent pay changes) to cover special situations or spikes in the market

▸ Indicated tension between goals of wanting a completely objective process and being responsive to the market

▸ Suggested different pay scales for different occupations in order to deal with market issues

▸ Felt a properly operating market sensitive system needs to have real time market data (pay surveys, etc)

▸ Acknowledged that creating a market sensitive pay system involves obtaining the needed funds

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They Indicated the Current System Can Be Improved: Job Duties, Classification, and Career Paths

EMPLOYEES

▸ Stated that improvements should be made to the classification system

  – Some classifications may be based on position descriptions (PDs) that are too general or outdated

  – PDs should be revised to reflect actual duties and should be further updated during times of transition to ensure duties are clear

  – New technology requirements and responsibilities need to be reflected in current PDs

  – Some current PDs may be designed for specific individuals, not necessarily the job

  – Standards are too rigid

▸ Suggested providing for dual career tracks (e.g., technical professionals and supervisors)

▸ Discussed issues around topping out at certain grade levels

SUPERVISORS

▸ Also noted that PDs are outdated and should be updated

▸ Recommended that alternative career paths be made available to employees who do not wish to become supervisors

▸ Indicated that sometimes staff are classified at the same grade level as the supervisor

HR PROFESSIONALS

▸ Indicated that rank-in-position systems may work well for some occupations but not others

▸ Suggested that grade structures allow easy movement between occupations and the organization

▸ Believed the pay and classification structure should be supportive of career paths and that career pathing should incorporate lateral movements as well as the traditional upward career progression

▸ Said that supervisors feel that the classification system inhibits what they can pay employees

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They Indicated the Current System Can Be Improved: Additional Improvements

EMPLOYEES

▸ Wanted additional pay for skills (e.g., languages), hazardous duties, special competencies, on-call status; wanted to resolve inconsistencies in how pay for skills and responsibilities is currently applied

▸ Felt that pay and overtime caps unfairly limit pay, and should be removed

▸ Noted that issues of pay compression and lack of supervisory overtime discourages employees from seeking management positions

▸ Wanted greater and more consistent use of QSIs and other performance awards

▸ Saw the value of allowing the ability to appeal pay decisions

SUPERVISORS

▸ Also felt it was important to compensate for special skills and responsibilities

▸ Wanted uncapped overtime pay for supervisors; noted that supervisors are sometimes paid less than employees

▸ Indicated that there are morale impacts of placing caps on overtime pay

HR PROFESSIONALS

▸ Felt DHS needs more flexibility in the pay and classification structure than is available with the current GS system

▸ Indicated a need to account for additions to employees' skills or market changes

▸ Noted that there needs to be an allowance in the system for handling a surge in the workforce when a disaster occurs

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Participants Noted That Exceptional Performers Should be Rewarded More Consistently and Frequently

EMPLOYEES	EMPLOYEES (CONT'D)

▸ Stated that additional awards are needed for those who excel in their jobs
 	
▸ Believed that high performers are not rewarded adequately or consistently, sometimes resulting in little incentive for "going the extra mile"
 	
▸ Felt the system should not only reward high performers—good performers who are meeting expectations should also receive pay increases
 	
▸ Were concerned that the current system does not recognize differences in performance; employees who do not work as hard get the same pay as those who do
 	
▸ Noted that the current methods for recognizing performance (e.g., QSIs and other awards) are used infrequently and inconsistently
	▸ Noted that rewarding individual performance may be inconsistent with teamwork principles and should not be used in all occupations
	
	▸ Provided suggestions to reward performance
	   – Provide greater and more consistent use of QSIs and performance awards
	   – Ensure adequate funding for pay increases and awards
	   – Promote team-based awards
	   – Offer a wide range of creative awards (e.g., dinner for two, pens, time off)

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Participants Noted That Exceptional Performers Should be Rewarded More Consistently and Frequently (cont'd)

SUPERVISORS	HR PROFESSIONALS
▸ Suggested that pay for performance systems be clearly linked to organizational goals ▸ Liked the fact that performance plans are linked to quality step increases ▸ Noted that FAA developed and uses an organizational success index—everyone gets an increase and the remainder of pay is based on performance	▸ Mentioned that perhaps increases could be performance-based in certain circumstances but not others; said that in some cases it is hard to differentiate individual performance

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They Expressed Mixed Views Regarding Paybanding and Other Performance-based Alternatives

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EMPLOYEES

▸ Voiced reservations about paybanding and other performance-based alternatives

– Did not understand paybanding or the need for it

▸ Expressed concerns that included:

– May give supervisors too much discretion over pay decisions

– Concerns about fairness and favoritism

– Supervisors may not be aware of all employee contributions and special efforts

– New hires may be compensated at a higher rate than experienced employees

– Lack of clarity regarding what pay is based on and how to progress

▸ Requested more information regarding how paybanding works

▸ Some employees who are currently under a paybanding system believed that the system is working well for them; others were less satisfied

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EMPLOYEES (CONT'D)

▸ Said that a paybanding system would enable DHS to recognize individuals that excel; though some felt that individual-based pay for performance might not work for every job

▸ Indicated that paybanding might help where there are no comparisons (for the occupation) in government

▸ Indicated if paybanding is implemented it must be done correctly and fairly

– Clearly define the system and how it will work

– Provide supervisors with training and tools to enable them to accurately measure performance and apply pay decisions

– Integrate checks and balances; to reduce subjectivity, supervisors should be held accountable for their decisions and consistent in their approaches

– Adequate funding to provide meaningful awards

– Must have objective standards

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They Expressed Mixed Views Regarding Paybanding and Other Performance-based Alternatives (cont'd)

SUPERVISORS

▸ Expressed similar concerns as employees about paybanding

▸ Indicated that any paybanding system must be fair and equitable for all

▸ Suggested the following practices

  – Using an organizational success index with increases for all and remainder of pay based on performance

  – Having established guidelines for pay decisions (e.g., local manager approves specific percentage increase)

  – Ensuring clear communication between supervisor and employee on how pay is determined

HR PROFESSIONALS

▸ Felt that paybanding enables organizations to hire better candidates

▸ Acknowledged the potential for and need to minimize subjectivity (e.g., through training, etc.)

▸ Indicated that a pay for performance system will require a significant change in culture and a significant commitment to education in order to foster change

▸ Cautioned that employees must be able to understand and predict what will happen in order to be comfortable with any new system

▸ Noted that there must be an absolute commitment to fund the system

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Performance Management Themes

▸ Employees perceived favoritism exists in the current process

▸ Participants wanted a consistent and fair process

▸ They thought evaluations should be based on relevant and clearly stated performance standards

▸ They also wanted performance evaluated by those knowledgeable of their work

▸ Participants wanted supervisors to have adequate time to spend on performance management activities, including increased communications, coaching, and career guidance

▸ They also wanted increased accountability for managing performance and ensuring fair, effective, and objective assessments

▸ Participants expressed contrasting views regarding rating scales

▸ Participants provided additional suggestions on how to improve performance management

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Employees Perceived Favoritism Exists in the Current Process

EMPLOYEES

▸ Believed favoritism exists in the current process

▸ Perceived that supervisory discretion, not employee performance, may drive performance ratings

  – Work plans are not quantifiable and are subjective

  – Ratings may be based on favoritism or inconsistent interpretation of ratings

  – Supervisors deal with performance issues by rating employees' performance as acceptable and promoting or transferring problem employees instead of rating performance accurately

SUPERVISORS

▸ Didn't discuss favoritism, but did comment on the overall effectiveness of current performance management systems

  – Some said their current system was working well, others said the system has become meaningless

  – Said performance systems depended on where you work as to whether they are good or fair or even relevant

HR PROFESSIONALS

▸ Said supervisors don't recognize poor performance because they don't want to be the "bad guy"

▸ Noted that if performance ratings are tied to RIF, everyone gets rated as outstanding

▸ Commented that organizations always have the same complaints with performance management—the system can help, but management team must have the tools

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Performance Management…

Participants Wanted a Consistent and Fair Process

EMPLOYEES

▸ Said supervisors should be required to support ratings with clear evidence and documentation

▸ Believed that supervisors may be reluctant to rate employees accurately because of documentation requirements

▸ Suggested an advisory panel of supervisors and/or peers review performance ratings

▸ Wanted employees to have the ability to appeal performance ratings

SUPERVISORS

▸ Believed that documentation requirements provide a disincentive to rate employees at either extreme

▸ Suggested using rater profiles to control bias (e.g., rating inflation)

▸ Saw the value of third party review in the performance assessment process
  – Said union involvement provided more balanced perspective

▸ Suggested that a rating of "meets expectations" or better should not be appealable

HR PROFESSIONALS

▸ Said that new systems must minimize subjectivity

▸ Believed that people sometimes are rewarded because of a good result that happened because of luck or something other than skill

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They Thought Evaluations Should Be Based on Relevant and Clearly Stated Performance Standards

EMPLOYEES

- Believed that performance standards should be
  - Clearly defined
  - Based on objective, measurable criteria
  - Tied to DHS mission and goals
  - Within an employee's control
  - Flexible (to accommodate changes in job duties)

- Some wanted core performance standards for all DHS employees, others said performance factors should be clearly defined for each job

- Noted that it may be difficult to measure/differentiate performance for some jobs

- Felt employees should be given performance standards prior to being rated on them

- Wanted involvement in setting standards and criteria

SUPERVISORS

- Said performance plans are too generic and don't match actual job duties

- Wanted objective and subjective measures

- Said that standards need to be within the employee's control, flexible to accommodate shifting expectations and duties, and relevant for individuals who work in teams

- Also said it may be difficult to develop measures for some jobs

- Felt employees should have input in establishing performance goals

- Suggested a competency-based system

- Recommended a core set of performance standards linked clearly with organizational goals, with some agency-specific elements

- Suggested streamlining the number of performance elements and standards

HR PROFESSIONALS

- Said that supervisors and employees should work together to set goals (need more training for this to work effectively)

- Stated that performance management must be tied to mission and organizational goals

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They Also Wanted Performance Evaluated By Those Knowledgeable of their Work

EMPLOYEES

‣ Said that the supervisor to whom they report may not be familiar with their work

‣ Recommended incorporating broader input into performance appraisals (e.g., multiple supervisors)

‣ Felt employees should be proactive about providing input into their own assessments

‣ Suggested requiring supervisors to observe employee performance on the job (for example, one participant says the automated case review system at ICE works well at keeping supervisors informed)

   – Acknowledged that this might be difficult for situations such as remote work sites and job rotations

SUPERVISORS

‣ Said that when supervisors are preoccupied with their own work they cannot watch employees closely enough

‣ Some said broader feedback in performance appraisals could provide greater objectivity; others said the peer review process is flawed

HR PROFESSIONALS

‣ Commented that 360 degree feedback in performance appraisals is not good for employees because it would end up with little meaning

‣ Suggested eliminating union share awards

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Participants Wanted Supervisors to Have Adequate Time to Spend on Performance Management Activities, Including Increased Communications, Coaching, and Career Guidance

EMPLOYEES	**EMPLOYEES (CONT'D)**

▸ Wanted supervisors to provide feedback so employees understand what is expected of them, where they stand, and how to progress in their careers
 	
  – Employees who currently receive regular communications were satisfied with their performance management system
 	
▸ Said that appraisals should:
 	
  – Provide meaningful feedback (e.g., not just check a box)
 	
  – Include performance expectations and employee progress
 	
  – Be used to support career progression
 	
▸ Stated that performance feedback from supervisors should be timely and on a predictable basis (e.g., mid-term or quarterly) so employees are aware of issues and have a chance to address them
 	
  – Supervisors should complete performance appraisals on time (e.g., no backdating)
 	
  – Employees should also receive periodic informal feedback
	▸ Said there should be an open dialogue; for example, employees and supervisors should discuss the appraisal and jointly set performance goals
	
	▸ Felt supervisors should take on the role of mentor or coach
	
	▸ Said employees should be proactive in setting expectations with supervisors, discussing accomplishments, seeking feedback, and managing their careers
	
	▸ Felt supervisors should also be held accountable for providing regular feedback
	
	▸ Believed that military supervisors do not always understand the culture of a civilian organization and the associated personnel processes, including the importance of appraisals and communication

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Participants Wanted Supervisors to Have Have Adequate Time to Spend on Performance Management Activities (cont'd)

SUPERVISORS

▸ Some felt employees understand what is expected of them, others said performance expectations need to be communicated throughout the year

▸ Said there is insufficient time and the performance management process needs to be less burdensome
  – For example, require a performance appraisal only when an employee is failing or doing exceptionally well

▸ Also said that informal performance-related discussions with employees are important
  – Performance discussions should be brief and to the point
  – Employees need more oral than written communication

▸ Expressed differing views regarding the frequency within which employee feedback should occur
  – Some said formal meetings should be held 2-4 times a year, others said formal meetings are too time consuming

▸ Believed that low employee/supervisor ratios are critical factors in effectively managing employees' performance

HR PROFESSIONALS

▸ Said that supervisors must talk with employees about performance

▸ Suggested using automated system to track the amount of time supervisors spend talking with employees about performance

▸ Recommended getting rid of Performance Improvement Plans (PIPs) because they are redundant and time consuming
  – Most supervisors have done this already
  – Allow supervisors to get rid of poor performers under some type of streamlined process

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They Also Wanted Increased Accountability for Managing Performance and Ensuring Fair, Effective, and Objective Assessments

EMPLOYEES

▸ Said that supervisors should be held accountable for getting employees up to speed

▸ Suggested several ways to hold supervisors accountable for performance management

- Establish clear guidelines for documenting work performance

- Make performance management/ development/award process part of supervisors' appraisals

- Establish supervisor and employee checklist to determine if process was followed correctly

- Allow the ability to appeal ratings and pay progression decisions

- Provide oversight through higher review levels or panels

- Allow employee input regarding supervisor performance

- Prove increased supervisory training

SUPERVISORS

▸ Said supervisors must be willing to face the pressure of assigning a "failing" rating to an employee

▸ Also said supervisors should be held accountable for managing employees performance, and noted their need for additional performance management training

- Training should include the performance appraisal process and how to define and articulate poor performance

- Supervisory stability would help (e.g., less rotations or acting positions)

▸ Some stated the system works well when you allow employees to evaluate supervisors, others were concerned that 360 degree feedback could be abused by disgruntled employees

HR PROFESSIONALS

▸ Discussed experience with 360 degree feedback regarding supervisor effectiveness

- Managers accepted this only because it would not be part of the rating

- Information is aggregated and provided to executives who use it to provide feedback to supervisors

- It is an effective tool for helping to determine how well the organization is doing

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Participants Expressed Contrasting Views Regarding Rating Scales

EMPLOYEES

▸ Some participants were satisfied with their current rating system, others believed "multiple levels are just as ineffective as pass/fail"

▸ Some said that multi-level rating systems provide employees with greater feedback and help ensure performance is monitored; others don't trust supervisors to distinguish performance fairly or consistently
  – Need to clearly define all rating levels

▸ Said performance rating quotas and forced ranking systems are a disincentive

▸ Some viewed the pass/fail rating system as less burdensome and said it facilitates the ability to discipline or fire employees; others felt pass/fail systems are too simplistic—they fail to recognize superior performance and allows supervisors to avoid dealing with performance issues

▸ Recommended a uniform and consistent rating scale

SUPERVISORS

▸ Said need to distinguish between "just meets" and "really exceeds"

▸ Wanted rating scales to be uniform, consistent, and clearly defined (e.g., "good, fair, and unacceptable" performance levels)

▸ Some believed multiple level systems enable finer performance distinctions and avenues for correcting performance; others said pass/fail systems are easy to administer and can reduce the number of grievances filed
  – Noted that pass/fail system should also have narratives

▸ Discussed the need to change perception that "fully satisfactory" and "excellent" are bad appraisal ratings

HR PROFESSIONALS

▸ Recommended a simple system that allows distinctions in terms of performance

▸ Some felt pass/fail systems reduce work for supervisors; others said pass/fail makes it difficult to recognize good performance and that current systems are not working
  – Said pay and awards decisions cannot be tied to a pass/fail system

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Participants Provided Additional Suggestions on How to Improve Performance Management

EMPLOYEES	EMPLOYEES (CONT'D)
▸ Indicated that the performance management system does not provide sufficient motivation – The system should be used to reinforce positive behavior, not just to discipline and highlight poor performance – Appraisals should include performance expectations and progress ▸ Wanted clearly defined promotional policies and career paths ▸ Said that DHS should provide adequate funding to support training for employee development (e.g., areas identified in the Individual Development Plan) ▸ Recommended that the process be easily understood, not labor-intensive, and that it be automated	▸ Expressed the need for standardization across DHS, such as through the establishment of core performance standards and use of consistent forms ▸ Believed it is important to maintain some flexibility in performance management systems to recognize current (and shifting) responsibilities

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Participants Provided Additional Suggestions on How to Improve Performance Management (cont'd)

SUPERVISORS	HR PROFESSIONALS

▸ Valued the ability to recognize and reward employees year round
   – Rewards should be linked to ratings
   – Employees should be rewarded for excellent performance in specific acts
   – Need to provide sufficient funds for salary increases or other performance awards
 	
▸ Noted that Individual Development Plans (IDPs) would help improve the performance management system; they also said that properly written performance plans can serve as IDPs
 	
▸ Expressed an interest in playing a more active role in designing and implementing the performance management system
 	
▸ Identified the need for increased employee awareness about performance expectations and how their performance is linked to the goals of the organization
	▸ Said performance management system should recognize cross-bureau performance success
	
	▸ Suggested that performance management for law enforcement should focus on group/team performance, with on-the-spot or similar awards for the individual who performs exceptionally
	
	▸ Felt honorary awards are also important in recognizing performance
	
	▸ Said it is critical that an adequate budget be set aside to support the performance management system
	
	▸ Cautioned that the more you tie to performance management the messier it becomes
	
	▸ Believed that if performance results play a part in a reduction in force (RIF), then DHS must have a uniform performance management system
	
	▸ Said the new performance management system should have a performance-based increase in base pay
	
	▸ Recommended that the system should be simple and flexible (e.g., to allow bureaus to develop appropriate standards)

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Labor Relations Themes

▶ Participants agreed that unions and collective bargaining rights should continue at DHS

▶ Participants wanted a labor/management relationship with two-way communications, teamwork, and non-adversarial problem solving

▶ Participants expressed contrasting views regarding a desire to reinstate partnerships versus concerns about the effectiveness of these processes

▶ Participants wanted more labor relations training and internal labor relations support with increased skills

▶ Participants expressed contrasting views regarding the need for flexibility in making personnel decisions during mission critical and emergency situations

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Participants Agreed That Unions and Collective Bargaining Rights Should Continue at DHS

EMPLOYEES

▸ Wanted strong unions at DHS
- Felt union rights have diminished
- Said current contracts should be followed

▸ Expressed contrasting views regarding the appropriateness of union representation in some parts of DHS (e.g., law enforcement, TSA, FEMA)

▸ Described several benefits of unions
- Representation of employees interests
- Channel for receiving information and providing input regarding organizational issues
- Avenue for appeals and grievances and assistance with obtaining due process
- Negotiated contracts provide clarity, consistency, and mutual accountability

▸ Said unions need to provide equitable representation for non-dues paying members

▸ Wanted mechanisms for resolving disputes for non-union employees

SUPERVISORS

▸ Prefer a single, negotiated labor/management contract

▸ A good contract can help avoid disputes

▸ Some said that unions can handle difficult employees better, others felt that unions can hamper supervisors' ability to deal effectively with poor performers

▸ Didn't want union representation in some parts of the organization (e.g., law enforcement, TSA)

▸ Felt that unions need to be more accountable to employees

HR PROFESSIONALS

▸ Valued having a controlling statute govern labor relations

▸ Felt there needs to be a fair voice for employees (with or without a union)

▸ Said union representatives were not always skilled

▸ Believed it would be harder for TSA to meet its mission if there was union representation

▸ Recommended having one union represent the workplace and one agreement

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Participants Wanted a Labor/Management Relationship With Two-Way Communications, Teamwork, and Non-Adversarial Problem Solving

EMPLOYEES

‣ Felt that the current relationship is adversarial

‣ Wanted a labor/management relationship built on trust and teamwork

– Supervisors need to respect unions

– Supervisors should solicit input

– Results in improved productivity, fewer grievances, and greater communication

‣ Recommended frequent, regular meetings between labor and management

– Said unions should increase communications with the workforce, too

‣ Suggested having informal mechanisms to resolve issues before they escalate (e.g., seek resolutions at lowest levels, increased communications at outset of an offense)

‣ Wanted supervisors to be held accountable for abiding by agreements

SUPERVISORS

‣ Also said that labor and management should have regular meetings to exchange ideas and emphasized the need for teamwork

– Said that frequent communications between management and employees' representatives exist

‣ Preferred working with local representatives who are familiar with the organization and employees

HR PROFESSIONALS

‣ Said the ideal relationship would be collaborative and non-adversarial

‣ Believed there is no incentive for unions to collaborate

‣ Suggested involving unions more up front (e.g., pre-decisional involvement)

‣ Said there is a need to enforce managerial accountability

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Participants Expressed Contrasting Views Regarding a Desire to Reinstate Partnerships Versus Concerns about the Effectiveness of These Processes

EMPLOYEES

▸ Some participants recommended reinstating partnerships, others believed that partnerships do not work

▸ Identified several benefits of partnerships

– Provides forum for management and union working together to discuss and resolve issues

– Eliminates many disagreements between employees and managers

– Keeps decisions at the lowest level

SUPERVISORS

▸ Said if clear rules are made at the national level, partnerships might work

▸ Also said an open-door policy would facilitate partnerships

▸ Believed the effectiveness of partnerships is often dependent upon personalities

▸ Feared managers give up rights in partnerships

HR PROFESSIONALS

▸ Did not discuss partnerships

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Participants Wanted More Labor Relations Training and Internal Labor Relations Support with Increased Skills

EMPLOYEES

▸ Commented on the value of skilled and experienced labor relations (LR) and human resource staff

  – Facilitate discussion and problem resolution between labor and management

  – Serve as a resource for managers and employees

▸ Recommended training for human resource and labor relations staff to enhance their skills and enable them to better support the needs of employees

▸ Also recommended training for both supervisors and employees regarding roles and responsibilities in the LR process

  – Train supervisors on the contract, process, and labor law

  – Train supervisors on alternative dispute resolution

▸ Liked having full-time EEO counselors

▸ Would like to have more alternative dispute resolution (ADR) training; feel ADR helps speed the process

SUPERVISORS

▸ Wanted additional skilled employees and support personnel in the LR/ER area

▸ Also wanted labor relations training for supervisors

▸ Commented that a lack of staffing in their labor management departments was causing bottlenecks and slowing down the process

  – Full-time EEO counselors who helped handle cases could provide quicker resolution of issues

▸ Noted that ADR can be effective, and that its effectiveness depends on how it is used and the union's interaction in the process

HR PROFESSIONALS

▸ Recommended training managers in conflict resolution rather than labor relations

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Participants Expressed Contrasting Views Regarding the Need for Flexibility in Making Personnel Decisions During Mission Critical and Emergency Situations

EMPLOYEES

▸ Said unions understand the need to not interfere with the mission in light of events that occurred on September 11

▸ Also said DHS should consider relaxing union rules in emergency situations and noted that the US President has the authority in emergency situations and that will supercede everything else

▸ Noted that, given the organization's mission, dialogue between managers and employees is critical regardless of union presence

SUPERVISORS

▸ Expressed the need for clear ground rules and an understanding that DHS must have the flexibility to respond effectively and efficiently to national security issues

▸ Also said that the HR structure should support employees performing direct mission work and noted that emergency-related management flexibilities are currently built into contracts at FEMA

HR PROFESSIONALS

▸ Suggested that DHS find out whether it can be treated differently from other organizations in terms of FOIA requests, especially for sensitive issues

▸ Expressed concerns with DHS' ability to control sensitive data, and said that management must regain control over secure data; cautioned, however, against blanket exclusions of information

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Discipline and Appeals Themes

▸ Participants recommended a streamlined, faster, and fair discipline and appeals process

▸ Participants wanted independent review of grievances and appeals

▸ Participants wanted more consistency in applying discipline

▸ Participants said supervisors should deal more effectively with poor performers

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Discipline and Appeals…

Participants Recommended a Streamlined, Faster, and Fair Discipline and Appeals Process

EMPLOYEES	**SUPERVISORS**
‣ Felt the current process works in many respects	‣ Said the discipline and appeals process is difficult and cumbersome
‣ Said appeals take too long	– Need clearly defined standards and timeframes, including reduced lag times between the occurrence and resolution of a disciplinary action
– Some issues take years to resolve	
– Delays primarily caused by failure to adhere to designated timelines	‣ Provided suggestions for how to speed up the process
– Timelines should be more efficient, but not compromise due process	– Use set timeframes in the EEO process as a model
– Suggested having standing arbitration panels	– Combine the General Counsel and LR offices to speed up the process or delegate authority
– Suggested streamlined process for simple offenses	
‣ Wanted all parties involved to adhere to clearly defined timeframes	‣ Said the amount of grievances filed impacts the speed of the process
– Have statute of limitations on complaints (e.g., within 90 days of offense)	– Believed some grievances are "frivolous"
– Limit time period for investigation (e.g., 90 days)	
‣ Wanted performance issues resolved at the lowest level whenever possible	

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Participants Recommended a Streamlined, Faster, and Fair Discipline and Appeals Process (cont'd)

HR PROFESSIONALS	HR PROFESSIONALS (CONT'D)

▶ Liked having body of regulations and due process
 	
▶ Said that processes associated with the EEOC, arbitrators, and the MSPB take a huge amount of time
 	
▶ Noted that the significant amount of case law that exists makes implementation tough
 	
▶ Said management's hands were tied up until issues were resolved
  – Suggested modified notice and allowing management to implement decisions during appeals
 	
▶ Believed it is important to try to resolve things internally first before going to an outside board (e.g., EEOC)
 	
▶ Suggested having only one appeals body
 	
▶ Suggested an appeals board not be allowed to overturn or mitigate penalties
	▶ Recommended having interest-based approaches for those that prefer it and a rights based approach for others
	
	▶ Said the Fair Labor Relations Act (FLRA) helps direct HR and management, but that FLRA also lengthens process time
	  – Diverts time and resources away from the organization's mission and impacts productivity
	  – Management's hands are tied until issues are resolved
	  – Causes turmoil among employees, unions, and management

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Participants Wanted Independent Review of Grievances and Appeals

EMPLOYEES

▶ Said neutral party involvement would provide greater objectivity in the appeals process

– Said the neutral party who hears appeals should not be from within the agency

▶ Also said neutral party involvement provides a mechanism for enforcing management accountability and improves the balance of power between employees and supervisors

▶ Offered suggestions for obtaining neutral party involvement that included arbitration, alternative dispute resolution (ADR), and panels or subcommittees of managers and employee representatives

▶ Expressed mixed views regarding whether the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) is a viable neutral party option

SUPERVISORS

▶ Said that mediation and ADR have been helpful in resolving disputes

▶ Suggested that an ombudsman could also be an effective and objective mediation approach

▶ Said decisions should be final, reducing or eliminating the need for the MSPB

HR PROFESSIONALS

▶ Believed employees would feel more comfortable with a neutral party who is outside the agency

▶ Identified problems with third-party arbitration: lack of consistency in arbitrators' decisions; the time it takes to educate an arbitrator about a case; and the length of time it takes to reach decision

▶ Said MSPB tries to be consistent in its decisions, but felt there have been some "bad" decisions

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Participants Wanted More Consistency in Applying Discipline

EMPLOYEES

▸ Said discipline policies are not written or applied consistently

 – Wanted DHS to establish and communicate clearly defined standards of acceptable behavior and discipline policies

 – Liked having a table of offenses, but some said it is too broad and leaves room for subjectivity

▸ Perceived inconsistency in the application of discipline

 – Perceived some favoritism exists

 – Recommended checks and balances

▸ Also felt there is inconsistency regarding the problems that are addressed (e.g., inappropriate behavior, not poor performance)

▸ Stated that supervisors should be held to the same standards as employees and should be disciplined similarly

SUPERVISORS

▸ Noted, as did employees, that the way discipline policies are written and applied is not consistent and that discipline should be applied consistently to both supervisors and employees

 – Develop and publish standards of conduct so that performance expectations are clear to all

 – Revise and post the table of offenses

▸ Suggested making distinctions between misconduct and poor performance

HR PROFESSIONALS

▸ Recommended department-level policy to minimize variation in procedures

▸ Suggested precedent-based approach would provide consistency and fairness, but also felt there is some bad precedent out there

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Participants Said Supervisors Should Deal More Effectively With Poor Performers

EMPLOYEES

▸ Felt supervisors are reluctant to deal with poor performers
  – Sends a message that poor performance is acceptable
  – Impacts the morale of the entire workforce
  – Want performance issues to be dealt with immediately

▸ Stated that it must be easier for supervisors to get rid of poor performers

▸ Said supervisors should be accountable for dealing with poor performers
  – Suggested using PIPs for performance improvement, not just as a punitive measure
  – Suggested peer involvement to alert supervisors of problems
  – Recommended a progressive approach to discipline
  – Said senior management should support supervisors' efforts to discipline employees

▸ Suggested training on the discipline and appeals process for supervisors and employees
  – Increase employees' awareness of discipline and appeals laws, rules, regulations, and procedures
  – Provide training to supervisors on how to document performance issues

SUPERVISORS

▸ Said they hesitate to deal with poor performers and discipline employees
  – Don't feel they get support when action is taken
  – Process is complex and burdensome

▸ Acknowledged that supervisors must be willing to face the pressure of assigning a "fail" rating
  – Wanted agency support (e.g., not decrease suspension times)

▸ Felt that hiring quality candidates would reduce discipline problems

▸ Believed probationary periods are important for employees in new positions

HR PROFESSIONALS

▸ Recommended making it easier to get rid of poor performers
  – Suggested not having PIPs

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Participants Discussed Other Issues Outside the Scope of the Design Team's Focus

▸ Indicated need for greater integration across DHS agencies

- Utilize staff and resources across agencies and departments effectively

- Increase consistency among agencies through communication, training, and guidelines

- Create single, unifying culture within DHS, taking into account input from all agencies

▸ Wanted to have a clear understanding on how all incoming and new agencies function

- Clearly define agency roles, responsibilities, and functions

- Critical to understand the relationship and unique needs that exist among all agencies within the organization

▸ Expressed concerns regarding competitive sourcing; wanted more information about DHS' plans and how it affects existing employees

▸ Expressed concerns around TSA, including

- Address basic issues (e.g., benefits, paychecks)

- Provide clarification around systems and processes that are in place

- Provide training for supervisors

- Minimize use of temporary supervisory rotations

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Participants Discussed Other Issues Outside the Scope of the Design Team's Focus (cont'd)

▶ Discussed other human resource functions

- **Training**: Provide supervisory skills training for supervisors and more developmental training for employees; consider centralized training and professional development

- **Benefits**: Provide employees with more choices and flexibilities (e.g., health insurance, retirement, flexibility with sick leave, tuition assistance, transportation subsidies)

- **Work-life balance**: Consider telecommuting and alternative work schedules to promote a positive workplace

- **Recruiting and selection**: Recruit qualified and skilled employees, especially at the supervisory level

- **Automated systems**: Decrease paperwork/administrative burden by streamlining through automation

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Appendices

Recruitment Table

Location		TSA	BICE	BCBP	FEMA/EPR	CG	S&T	USSS	EPR	IG	FLETC
NY	Union Employees*	0	10	12	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
	Non-union Employees	15	5	3	5	1	2	6	0	0	0
	Supervisors	3	3	3	2	0	0	1	0	0	0
El Paso	Union Employees*	0	24	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Non-union Employees	5	9	6	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Supervisors	1	7	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Atlanta	Union Employees*	0	4	5	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Non-union Employees	15	3	2	2	0	0	2	8	2	15
	Supervisors	3	2	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	3
Detroit	Union Employees*	0	12	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Non-union Employees	15	3	7	1	3	0	11	0	0	0
	Supervisors	3	3	3	0	1	0	2	0	0	0
Miami	Union Employees*	0	12	10	0	4	0	0	0	0	0
	Non-union Employees	15	3	5	1	2	0	5	3	0	0
	Supervisors	3	3	3	0	1	0	1	1	0	0
Norfolk	Union Employees*	0	1	2	0	7	0	0	0	0	0
	Non-union Employees	18	1	1	2	28	0	0	0	0	0
	Supervisors	4	0	1	0	7	0	0	0	0	0
Seattle	Union Employees*	0	7	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Non-union Employees	15	4	4	13	7	0	1	0	0	0
	Supervisors	3	2	3	3	1	0	0	0	0	0
Los Angeles	Union Employees*	0	10	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Non-union Employees	15	5	6	4	2	0	9	0	0	0
	Supervisors	3	3	3	1	0	0	2	0	0	0
Baltimore	Union Employees*	0	1	1	0	14	0	0	0	0	0
	Non-union Employees	3	2	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
DC	Union Employees*	0	2	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	0
	Non-union Employees	8	3	3	5	1	0	8	0	0	0
	Supervisors	2	2	2	3	1	0	2	0	0	0

*AFGE, NTEU, NAAE, MTC

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Appendix B

DHS HRMS Focus Group Protocol

Introduction

Facilitator welcomes focus group members, introduces self, provides background and introduces the topic for discussion:

"Good morning (afternoon) and welcome to this focus group session. I'm _____ from Booz Allen Hamilton and I will be facilitating this important discussion of personnel policies and practices for the Department of Homeland Security [refer to purpose flipchart]. Your observations and insights will provide valuable input to the DHS/OPM Design Team and ultimately to the Secretary of the Department and the Director of the Office of Personnel Management as they craft options for new personnel policies and practices.

[Refer participants to fact sheet.] Let me take a moment to provide some background on why we are here and what we hope to accomplish with your help. You'll recall that an important part of the Homeland Security Act was the design of new personnel policies and practices. The Act directs that new personnel policies and practices be developed in collaboration with DHS employees. We are assuring this collaboration is happening in numerous ways, including:

1. Creating a joint DHS/OPM Design Team consisting of employees, managers, and union representatives from DHS and individuals from OPM;

2. Increased communication with DHS employees via DHS Today, the DHS website and other sources [also note the e-mail address for providing feedback]; and

3. These focus groups and town hall meetings, which are being conducted across the country and which include individuals from all different jobs, organizations, and locations.

Your input today is crucial to our success in designing new personnel policies and practices for the Department. This isn't to say there is necessarily anything wrong with the current systems, or that anything is broken. The fact is that many different organizations have been combined, each with many different personnel systems, and this team is charged with determining what the best approach or approaches are going forward.

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DHS HRMS Focus Group Facilitation Guide (cont'd)

A moment ago, I mentioned a joint DHS/OPM Design Team, which was established for the specific purpose of developing options for new personnel policies and practices. This team came together for the first time at the beginning of April, at which time they heard from Secretary Ridge. I would like to quote some comments to the Design Team from Secretary Ridge regarding this effort:

> *"Thank you for contributing to this historic moment. All of us have two missions to accomplish. Our primary mission is to protect Americans and our way of life from terrorism. But just as important is to protect employee rights and to improve the way we perform our jobs. We have a chance to build a Department of Homeland Security that stands as a <u>model of excellence and fairness</u> for all of American government. And that begins today."*

In his comments, Secretary Ridge mentioned…

- This is just the beginning of the process; the final rules may not be issued until the end of the year

- The importance of employee involvement in the process

- That the new system should support the mission of DHS and the people charged with implementing that mission

- That preconceived notions be left at the door as we create a system that is fair and flexible

- That we preserve basic civil service protections

- That we hold people accountable for their performance; and

- That we foster a <u>cooperative, positive</u> work environment that <u>recognizes and rewards</u> the hard work and dedication of employees.

Several members of the Design Team are with me today. Design team members care very much about your input in this process and are here to hear it first hand. They will also help capture notes and may provide subject matter expertise as needed. I'll ask each of them to introduce themselves in a moment when we go around and do introductions.

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DHS HRMS Focus Group Facilitation Guide (cont'd)

Facilitator moves to a discussion of ground rules [refer to flip chart list posted on wall where everyone can see].

We anticipate that the focus group will last 90 minutes and will end at ___. We have a lot to cover by then, but before we start it's important to note some important ground rules:

Honesty and openness. We want everyone to feel comfortable sharing information here today. We will not attribute anything discussed in this focus group to any individual by name, and we ask that all participants agree to do the same. As the focus group progresses, you will notice some of us taking notes. Note takers will not record names. Later, notes from all the focus groups will be reviewed and we will note important themes and insights.

One person talks at a time.

Courtesy and respect for one another's opinions, even if you disagree. Courtesy in this context means being a polite listener, not interrupting a speaker, and assuring that all ideas have a fair hearing.

Avoid side conversations.

Focus on topic. Discussion needs to stay *focused* on the topic. Because time is so short, we need to limit all remarks to the topic being discussed. I will list any issues that arise that are not directly related to the focus of this discussion on a "parking lot" flip chart.

As the facilitator, at times I may need to interrupt. My role as a facilitator is to help move the conversation along. At times I may need to interrupt you just to keep the group moving forward and ensure I hear from a range of folks – if so, please don't be offended or take it personally. In the spirit of hearing from everyone, it would be very helpful if individuals could also do some self monitoring too. If you feel you haven't had a chance to contribute and don't feel comfortable jumping in, please raise your hand so I can recognize you; on the other hand, if you sense you have commented a lot on a topic, try sitting back for a few moments to see if others have something to add.

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DHS HRMS Focus Group Facilitation Guide (cont'd)

In a moment, I'll ask each of you to introduce yourselves but before I do, are there any questions about the focus group process?

Let's go around the room and introduce ourselves. As you do this please do four things: (1) Give us your first name, (2) Your organization (3) Your specific job. [Post these questions on a flip chart sheet in advance] [After participants introduce themselves, ask Design Team members/observers to introduce themselves as well.]

Thanks. [Facilitator may want to note the composition of focus group, etc.]

A couple of fast logistical issues and we'll dive right into the session (location of bathrooms, etc.).

Focus Group Questions

Think about the current personnel policies and practices employed by your agency — specifically, the six areas written on the flip chart: pay, classification, performance management, labor relations, discipline, appeals procedures. I'd like to go through each of these areas to determine what is working well and what, if anything, you would change. Please note that you as participants represent different components of DHS and, therefore, many different personnel systems. Thus, while I will be asking about your current experiences with personnel polices and practices, we'd like to focus most of our time on what you would like to see in the future. [Facilitator briefly describes and asks the following questions for each area: (1) pay and classification, (2) performance management, (3) labor relations, (4) discipline and appeals; some focus groups will go through these areas in a different order to make sure all areas are covered.]

— What is working well? What factors most help accomplish the mission? Why?
— What, if anything, would you change? How would that help DHS better accomplish its mission?

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DHS HRMS Focus Group Facilitation Guide (cont'd)

Specific prompts (to use if conversation is lulled or to probe deeper into the issues raised):

- What motivates you (e.g., pay, assignment, recognition, other)? Why?

- What do you think pay should be based on (e.g., longevity, performance, skill, etc.)? Why

- How well do you think supervisors distinguish good/poor performers? Why? [For managers, ask: How well do HR processes help you distinguish between good/poor performers? Why?]

- What is the proper balance between union rights and mission needs?

- How do you think employee misconduct should be handled?

- How do you think unacceptable performance should be handled?

- What are the elements of a sensible and fair system for handling employee appeals?

Is there anything else you want the Design Team to know?

We have prepared a short exit survey for you to complete before you leave. The survey asks for some basic demographic information so that we have an idea, in aggregate, of the types of individuals involved in this data collection process. It doesn't ask for any names. When completed, please hand me the survey.

Conclusion

Facilitator summarizes key themes from focus group as he/she goes through each area.

Thank you all very much for your help and insights. If you think of anything else you would like the Design Team to know, please contact the Design Team at the following email address: hrdesignteam@dhs.gov. [Write contact information on a flip chart sheet and post where everyone can see it].

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